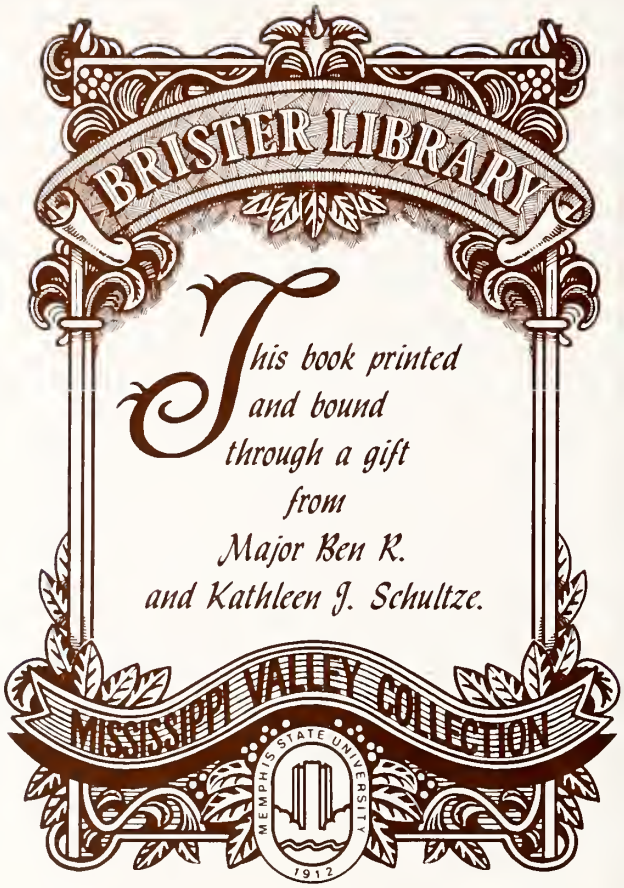
HISTORY OF MEMPHIS
INTERVIEWS WITH
ANNA BENNETT GORDON

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER: J. DOUGLAS SIMS
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY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MARCH 10, 22, 1988

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PLACE MEMPHIS, TN

DATE MARCH 10, 1988

Annie D. Gordon

(INTERVIEWEE)

Charles W. Crawford

(For the Mississippi Valley Archives of the John Willard Brister Library of Memphis State University)

(OHRO FORM B)

THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS THE HISTORY OF MEMPHIS. THE DATE IS MARCH 10, 1988. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MISS ANNA BENNETT GORDON. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE.

DR. CRAWFORD: Miss Gordon, I'd like to ask you first about the earliest things you can remember about Memphis. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

MISS GORDON: I was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi August 18, 1893.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a year when there was a depression, and I believe that that year William Henry Harrison was president of the United States. No, Grover Cleveland had come back for his second term. And there were no cars in Vicksburg then. How long did you live in Vicksburg?

MISS GORDON: Well, I was born there and I lived there... Well, I just don't know the year we came, but I was a baby. Probably one and a half or two years old.

DR. CRAWFORD: In the 1890's, then?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did your parents move to Memphis?

MISS GORDON: Well, it's a long story. My father worked for the Singer Sewing Machine Company and he was transferred from Vicksburg to Memphis. That's the reason he

came.

DR. CRAWFORD: You don't remember the trip. You were too young, weren't you?

MISS GORDON: Too young. I was just a baby. I don't know whether I was walking yet or not.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did they move when they came to Memphis? What street did you live on?

MISS GORDON: It was one of those streets nearer town. Adams, probably. Well, I'll tell you who they moved in with and that my parents got rooms with Abe Plough.

DR. CRAWFORD: Abe Plough!

MISS GORDON: I don't know how long they lived there. But they built the home that we had, that I grew up in, out on the corner of Edith and South Wellington, and that's where we moved.

DR. CRAWFORD: Edith and South Wellington. Do you remember what corner that was on, Miss Gordon?

MISS GORDON: It was the northwest corner.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know if the home is still there?

MISS GORDON: The home is still there on the back of the lot. But there are some apartments built up at the front of the lot. The home was moved around facing Edith, and this apartment house was built on the corner.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember living at that home?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did your parents live there?

MISS GORDON: Well, now, there was a period of time there when my

mother rented while my father traveled. And why he traveled, I really don't know. I never had thought of it and really don't know anything about it, you know. But she got rooms in the home on the corner of Edith and Preston, they called the street at that time. And we lived there for some time, and my father came back to Memphis. He was traveling. I don't know why he was on the road, but anyway, she couldn't be alone with just a baby, so she rented some rooms.

DR. CRAWFORD: Some jobs required travel then.

MISS GORDON: Did they? He was a bookkeeper. I really don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you remember that place.

MISS GORDON: Yes, I remember that place.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did you live there?

MISS GORDON: Well, we went there when I was about four or five years old. And we lived there a few years, I know, before we moved into this home. We moved into this home when I was two years old, that he built. And then when he went on the road, we moved into the home of this family up on the corner of Edith and Preston. And we stayed there.

DR. CRAWFORD: While he traveled.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And then you moved back to the home.

MISS GORDON: Yes. And stayed there until I was about... Mercy! I haven't thought of that in years.

DR. CRAWFORD: We're going back in time.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well what school did you go to?

MISS GORDON: Lauderdale School. But first I went to a little school called LaRose School. It was down on South Wellington. Wellington runs north and south. It was north of Walker. It was called LaRose Street School, and I went there for one or two years. And then they built Lauderdale School and then I went from Lauderdale and graduated the eighth grade at Lauderdale and went to high school, first when it was in Jefferson, the old Jefferson School, you know?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, downtown.

MISS GORDON: And then to Poplar, where Memphis High School was at that time. And then they built the new one on Bellevue and then I graduated there. We were the first graduating class.

DR. CRAWFORD: What years was that?

MISS GORDON: February, 1913.

DR. CRAWFORD: Nineteen thirteen.

[There is a brief gap in the recording.]

DR. CRAWFORD: And the school you started was LaRose school, your first school?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And then you graduated at Central with the first graduating class in 1913.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember anything about the size of that

class, Miss Gordon? You probably have a yearbook, but would you say it was...

MISS GORDON: No, I don't have a yearbook. But I know someone that graduated with me, Margaret Boothe. Oh, what's that subdivision just north, right at Parkway and Trezevant? What's that subdivision? What do they call that? I can't think of it right now.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Hein Park?

MISS GORDON: Hein Park. That's right. She lives over there in Hein Park. She goes to the Evergreen Presbyterian Church, where I'm a member.

DR. CRAWFORD: You graduated that year with the first class from Central.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And had you given any thought to being a teacher?

MISS GORDON: Well, of course I had. My mother directed that almost completely. I didn't have much to do with it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was one of the things you could do then.

MISS GORDON: Yes. I took the teachers' examination and passed it all right.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you were ready to start?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you still living at home at that time, at Wellington and Edith?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And the family was still at the same place.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have brothers or sisters?

MISS GORDON: Never. Never. I've always been just one child.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you graduated. And can you tell me what Memphis was like then? Do you remember it? Did people drive cars to school?

MISS GORDON: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Not when you graduated.

MISS GORDON: I don't know of anyone that had a car that they just used for that purpose. They may have, but I wasn't aware of it. They had cars.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did almost everyone walk to school?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. I used to walk to Central High School from up there on South Wellington and Edith.

DR. CRAWFORD: People walked long distances, then.

MISS GORDON: Spend your money for a sour pickle.

DR. CRAWFORD: You could have ridden the streetcar.

MISS GORDON: Yes, we could have ridden the streetcars.

DR. CRAWFORD: But you'd save your money to buy a sour pickle.

MISS GORDON: Yes, we'd save our money and walk home, a group of us, you know, and buy us... [Laughter]

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you see people with horses and wagons or buggies, then?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were the streets paved around the school?

MISS GORDON: You mean Central?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MISS GORDON: I think so. I really don't remember. I think they were.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you study at Central? Did you take the regular coursework?

MISS GORDON: I took the work with Latin in it -- Latin and French and Algebra and English, I think that was the first course. I didn't take French until about the third year, I believe.

DR. CRAWFORD: Central became a very fine high school.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And sent a lot of people to colleges around the country, you know.

MISS GORDON: I had a graduating picture of the 1913 class, and I gave it to Margaret Boothe, because I was at that time thinking about moving and I had to, of course, reduce my belongings to get into one of these apartments. And I've been thinking about that and dreaming about it ever since, but I never did make the move. But I knew that I didn't have anybody who would care for that picture and she had children and grandchildren and she liked the picture, and I just said, well, she could have that.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was the 1913 class.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you do at Central besides take your classes? Did you take part in any clubs or anything? In the Glee Club, for example?

MISS GORDON: No, I didn't take part in the Glee Club. I was

trying to think. I don't think I was in any club.

DR. CRAWFORD: You worked pretty hard in your classes.

MISS GORDON: I don't remember any club.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember who was the superintendent, then, of schools? In 1913?

MISS GORDON: In 1913. Wharton Jones. Now I am trying to think.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, who were the teachers you remember best?

MISS GORDON: Well, of course, I remember Miss Little. She was my English teacher. And then there was another teacher there. And what was her name? You know, it's just recently that I...

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Miss Taylor. Minnie Taylor.

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. She was my very first teacher that I started out when I was about six years old. Now what am I trying to think of. I know the principal of the school was Williams. A man by the name of Williams. And I believe there was one fair-complexioned man that came out. What was his name? Let's see. I haven't thought of him in so long.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, at that time, you were still living at home, weren't you?

MISS GORDON: Yes, oh, yes. I lived at home until my parents died.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did they die?

MISS GORDON: Well my mother died in, I think it was '51, and my father in '52.

DR. CRAWFORD: Very close together, then.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And so you lived at the same place all that time.

MISS GORDON: I lived with my parents all of my life. I was 56 or 57 years old, something like that, when they died.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you graduated, was it February, 1913?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that half-way through the year?

MISS GORDON: Well, they had two terms, you know. Yes, that was half-way. I had been out of school a few months there and went back and finished up. And that's the reason I was a little late in graduating, from when I first started. Because there was a term there, a few months, that I didn't go to school on account of my health.

DR. CRAWFORD: But your health was good when you graduated.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And what did you hope to do after you graduated, Miss Gordon.

MISS GORDON: Well, I always had in mind that I would be teaching, and I did. And they formed a teachers' training class, and I attended that. And several others of us in the graduating class went. And we all became teachers.

DR. CRAWFORD: When was this training class? Was that after you left Central? Or was that at Central?

MISS GORDON: That was after I left Central. That was just after I graduated, I think the very first year that they had this training. You know, we'd meet and got our jobs from

that, I guess. We had to take and pass an examination for teachers.

DR. CRAWFORD: To get certified.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, was this class taught at Central, that you went to? This teacher training class?

MISS GORDON: We surely met there. I don't remember.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember the exam you took? Was it a written exam?

MISS GORDON: It was a written examination. On all of the subjects. History and Geography and Arithmetic and... what else was there? Language.

DR. CRAWFORD: You took Latin.

MISS GORDON: Well, yes. But I didn't have to take an examination in Latin because I wasn't to teach in high school. I was just going to teach in the lower grades. Grade school.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember when they gave that test? Was that the spring or summer? You had graduated in February, I know.

MISS GORDON: Yes, it must have been in the spring. It must have been.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you had passed the test, so you were ready to be a teacher.

MISS GORDON: Yes. And started in September.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you applied to the Memphis City Schools.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And September, of course, was when the year started. Where was your first job? Where did you teach?

MISS GORDON: It was a job as an assistant, and aide. Let me see now. I think it was A.B. Hill School.

DR. CRAWFORD: A.B. Hill School?

MISS GORDON: It was out there on Latham.

DR. CRAWFORD: Latham?

MISS GORDON: Latham and... what's the name of that street? It wasn't Latham and Trigg, was it? No, that's further up on the hill. It was farther up on the hill. I just don't remember what the name of that street was.

DR. CRAWFORD: What grade did you work with when you started?

MISS GORDON: Well, I was assistant to the first grade and the second grade. You'd go in, you'd take a little class into the cloakroom and hear them read and just help the teacher.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was A.B. Hill School?

MISS GORDON: A.B. Hill.

DR. CRAWFORD: A.B. Hill. And that was sort of training, wasn't it, for you?

MISS GORDON: Yes, that was sort of like a training school.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember who your teacher was?

MISS GORDON: That I assisted?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MISS GORDON: Well Miss Mary Whitemore, Miss Whitemore, and Miss Spangler. You knew Miss Spangler, didn't you? And

I helped those two, and let me see. Who else.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you work as an aide all of your first year?

MISS GORDON: I think I did. I believe I did.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you like working with the first grade?

MISS GORDON: Yes, I did. I love the little children.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's a fine age.

MISS GORDON: Well, the second grade, I believe Miss Whitemore was teaching the second grade at that time. And I would go wherever the teachers needed me and coach some of their children that needed some extra help. That's the way we had the training.

DR. CRAWFORD: So the students got individual help when they needed it?

MISS GORDON: Yes, in that way.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were the classes small then?

MISS GORDON: Yes, comparatively small. When I got further along in the teaching they began to increase in numbers to where we'd have thirty to thirty-five or forty children in a class. It was a little later though. But, now, the first grade teacher would have a pretty good size class, and that was our purpose, to go in and help her, you see.

DR. CRAWFORD: So she would have an aide with a larger class.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did the students use tablets to learn their writing, and pencils?

MISS GORDON: Yes, yes they did. Little copybooks.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you still used a blackboard, though.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now did you start your teaching the second year? You were an aide for one year.

MISS GORDON: Yes, I must have. I think I did. I don't remember just how soon it was that I got a grade of my own. And I don't remember just what that first grade was.

DR. CRAWFORD: How many grades have you taught?

MISS GORDON: Well, of course, in that period of my life, I taught in any one, from one to eight. Now what was your question?

DR. CRAWFORD: What different grades have you taught?

MISS GORDON: Well, that included one to eight, any of those in there. Of course, that just took in the grammar grades. High school wasn't included in that eight.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was a separate school.

MISS GORDON: That was separate, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you do during the summers then?

MISS GORDON: Well, I went to school, mostly. I've spent my life in school. I never went to college in my life, on a full year. I went to college in the summertime, in the summer months, and I took correspondence courses. And that's the way I got my degree. Entirely by summer schools and correspondence. It wasn't easy.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did you go to summer school?

MISS GORDON: Of course, I went out here to Normal. Then there was one year I went to Valparaiso, Indiana. And then I decided -- I had a friend, we decided -- her name was

Lenora Sandling. Did you happen to know her? Well, she and I decided that that would be an ideal place to study in the summer, up there, in the lakes, you know, up there in Madison, Wisconsin, and we decided that we'd go to Madison, Wisconsin, for our summer schools. And that's what I did the rest of the time. And I don't know how many summers I went to that. And I got my degree there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was sort of a vacation as well as study, wasn't it?

MISS GORDON: Yes, my vacation was given over to that. And that's how I got my degree.

DR. CRAWFORD: You must have enjoyed that travel to Wisconsin in the summer. It was a nice change.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: It's further north and cooler in the summer.

MISS GORDON: Yes. It had some pretty hot days, humid days, you know, but generally speaking, it was a nice pleasant place to go and study for the summer.

DR. CRAWFORD: When you went to Normal, Miss Gordon, how did you travel? How did you get there?

MISS GORDON: Well, I went on the streetcars. You know, the trolley.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where would you get on the streetcar?

MISS GORDON: Well, there was a line that came out South Wellington. There was one that came down Rayburn. They used to call that Rayburn. That's South Third. And McLemore, along McLemore there. And I would catch it there. They had another one that came straight up South Wellington there and

ended at Walker.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did the streetcar turn around at Normal, Miss Gordon? Did the streetcar turn around and come back at Normal?

MISS GORDON: Let me see. You know, I just don't remember. I think so.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you ever ride the train out there?

MISS GORDON: No, I never did.

DR. CRAWFORD: You remember the old depot, though?

MISS GORDON: What?

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember the old depot or train station?

MISS GORDON: No. I don't remember that. But I tell you, I was driving my own car out there many summers. You know, my own car.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, will you tell us how you got...

MISS GORDON: That's after I started teaching, I went to Normal in the summer time. That's how I got my degree.

DR. CRAWFORD: Will you tell us how you got your car?

MISS GORDON: Oh, I worked, I taught school, and saved my money and bought it.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind was your first car?

MISS GORDON: It was an old Maxwell car. Do you remember?

DR. CRAWFORD: I've heard of them.

MISS GORDON: It was a second-hand car.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what you paid for it?

MISS GORDON: Eight hundred dollars. I had a book before I bought the car, and I studied it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now you're talking about buying your first car. You had a book about how to drive a car.

MISS GORDON: Yes. And I knew, on that dashboard, I knew what was there and what it was for and how to manipulate it.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you learned how to drive a car by reading a book.

MISS GORDON: That's what I did.

DR. CRAWFORD: And then you bought your car.

MISS GORDON: And then my father was given the one lesson they gave. I sat on the back seat and I looked over their shoulder and looked at everything and we came home. And that was a Sunday morning. And I got in that car and put that book down on my lap and went over to my best friend's house and picked her up and her mother. Now they were brave to go with me... [Laughter]

DR. CRAWFORD: Because you'd never driven before.

MISS GORDON: No, it was the first time I was behind a wheel, but I had always had a bicycle and I rode my bicycle, growing up with a bicycle. And I could guide things and I knew that if I knew how to stop, I just knew what to do to get stopped, that that would solve everything.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you learned where that brake was.

MISS GORDON: I knew where that was. And everything about it, how to turn the engine off and everything. And I had that book in front of me and my mother sat at my side and my friends in the back. We went out from Edith and South Wellington.

I was living there at the time, out to Overton Park here.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: And that was way out in the country back then.

MISS GORDON: That was considered a "fur piece." [Laughter]

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, were the roads paved out there?

MISS GORDON: Yes, yes, they were. But I crept along. I didn't race.

DR. CRAWFORD: Some people were driving fast, probably, because they called North Parkway the speedway then.

MISS GORDON: I don't think I went out the parkway then. I don't remember just how I reached there, but I got there. And my poor father was home walking out on the front porch all the time. He didn't know what. It was after dark when I got home.

DR. CRAWFORD: And his daughter was out with a car she had never driven, though you had the book on your lap that told you how to do it.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you would look at the book about what to do.

MISS GORDON: Yes. If I got into trouble. I didn't have to refer to it much, because I already knew what had to be done. I was confident that I could stop it. And that was the thing that...

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Your father wasn't in favor of your having an automobile, was he?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. My father was always in favor of whatever I wanted. But my mother wasn't in favor, and that's where my trouble started. My mother thought a horse and buggy was just plenty for her, and for me too. So I had that

difficulty to overcome before I ever planned to get a car. But I wanted a car so bad that nobody living, I don't believe, ever wanted a car as bad as I did. So I finally got her to say that I could buy one, and she helped me to buy it, I mean she went down and helped me select it. And I got this secondhand car, an old Maxwell.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did you buy it?

MISS GORDON: I don't know. I just don't know where I bought it.

DR. CRAWFORD: What color was it?

MISS GORDON: It was a dark blue, I think.

DR. CRAWFORD: Most cars were dark colored then, weren't they?

MISS GORDON: Yes, real dark.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you were very proud of that car.

MISS GORDON: Oh, I could, I think I could have just lived in that car and never eat or sleep either. I was so eager for that car. Nobody ever wanted anything any more than I did that. And I had saved and got enough to buy it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you started driving to work, then, didn't you?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you would drive to Normal in the summer.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you go to Wisconsin?

MISS GORDON: Well, I drove up there. I drove to Wisconsin. At that time, I don't know whether my first year at Wisconsin, whether I drove or not, but I know the following years I did. And my mother went with me up there. And we got

housekeeping rooms and she would fix my meals for me and we lived there while I went to school. I then we drove home together. But it took me five days, from Memphis to Madison. That was the first summer.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was sort of a vacation for both of you, wasn't it?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where would you stop along the way? Would you look for hotels in towns.

MISS GORDON: No, at that time, they had these places where you could get a room for the night. Well, I guess some of them would be a hotel. It just depended upon where we happened to be at the time we were ready to stop for the day. But it took me five days to drive up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: A five day drive from Memphis to Madison, Wisconsin is a long trip. And you would look for restaurants and eat along the way?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you enjoy travel?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I told you I could have lived in there and eaten in there and slept in there. I was so anxious for a car.

DR. CRAWFORD: What were the roads like then?

MISS GORDON: Well, they weren't so very good. But they weren't too bad. We got there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were many of them paved?

MISS GORDON: Yes, they were pretty good. They were beginning to

get pretty good.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you still have some gravel roads?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. And some rough roads. I remember driving through gulleys and it was a little bit rough. And I suppose that was what delayed me so much.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have to use ferrys to cross rivers?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Or they had many of them, then?

MISS GORDON: Well I don't think there were many of those here, between here and Madison, the road I took. I think there was only about... I don't believe I had to go a ferry across anyplace.

DR. CRAWFORD: On that trip.

MISS GORDON: I don't believe I did.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you go? Did you drive through St. Louis?

MISS GORDON: No. I went Highway 52, I think. But at that time, I don't know if they called it 52 or not. I've never thought of that. I had a map. My mother and I studied the map and just took the roads we had to take.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of gas stations did they have then?

MISS GORDON: Well, they weren't fine gas stations. They were just little one pump places, and we got enough gas to get there.

DR. CRAWFORD: You would drive into town and look for a gas pump.

MISS GORDON: Yes. They had them along the roads, too. And we didn't have any trouble that way at all, as I remember. We never had any unusual, any frightening experiences

or anything. We just got in the car and drove off.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you saw, I guess you saw, a lot of buggies and wagons.

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: As well as trucks and cars.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember any towns you went through on the way?

MISS GORDON: No, I don't, I don't remember. But we went right through the towns. They didn't have the highway skirting around or anything like that. We just went right straight through the towns.

DR. CRAWFORD: Down the main street, wasn't it?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they have traffic lights then?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have to have a driver's license?

MISS GORDON: Yes, I had to have a license to drive it.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know when they started.

MISS GORDON: Well, to tell you the truth, I don't know when they started that either, but I know I had to have one.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well what year did you graduate in Wisconsin?

MISS GORDON: In 'thirty-eight, I believe it was.

DR. CRAWFORD: By that time the roads were getting better?

MISS GORDON: Yes, oh yes. I believe, now I wouldn't say for sure. I'd have to look that up. But I think that's when it was.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what year you bought your car? The Maxwell?

MISS GORDON: The Maxwell?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MISS GORDON: No, I don't.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had you been teaching long?

MISS GORDON: No, I hadn't been. Just a few years. Three or four, something like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you started in 1913. So you got a very early car.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you keep it a long time?

MISS GORDON: Not very long. My second car that I bought was a Whippet. Do you remember the little Whippets?

DR. CRAWFORD: I've read of them. What did it look like?

MISS GORDON: Well, the one I got was a little pale green one. They were the smallest cars at that time, that I remember. And we liked it very well.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you drive it to Wisconsin any?

MISS GORDON: I think I did. I believe I did. Now the first one, that Maxwell, was just an open car, you know, a five passenger car. If a rain came up, you had to get out and put up some little curtains and things.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was the Whippet a closed car?

MISS GORDON: Yes, the Whippet was a closed car.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you had plenty of room to take your luggage and things for the summer.

MISS GORDON: Oh yes, oh yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember how many summers you went to Normal?

MISS GORDON: No, I don't remember just how many. But that was several, several summers.

DR. CRAWFORD: And then you started going to Wisconsin.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what year you started at Wisconsin?

MISS GORDON: I can't tell you right off, but if you really wanted to know, I think I could find out.

DR. CRAWFORD: It would have been in the teens, perhaps, wouldn't it, before the nineteen-twenties?

MISS GORDON: I think it would have been.

DR. CRAWFORD: Perhaps about the time of World War I.

MISS GORDON: Now let me think. I'd just have to do some research.

DR. CRAWFORD: I understand. That's all right. Do you remember what things were like in World War I?

MISS GORDON: Well, not very distinctly. I remember the first time that they declared the war had quit, you know. Everybody piled in on the streetcars and went to town and a lot of blowing and going on, you know.

DR. CRAWFORD: A big celebration.

MISS GORDON: A big celebration, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was Armistice Day, November 11, 1918.

MISS GORDON: Was that it?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. And you were probably in school that day, unless they dismissed school.

MISS GORDON: Well I don't remember that.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was just after they opened the first bridge for cars, the Harahan Bridge.

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember that?

MISS GORDON: No, I don't remember that.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a little before that. Now had the city started changing any by that time? Did you notice anything different about it?

MISS GORDON: In what way?

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, did they have different streetcars, or was the city beginning to grow?

MISS GORDON: I think so. In what year now would that be?

DR. CRAWFORD: The war ended in 1918.

MISS GORDON: Before 'twenty.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MISS GORDON: Of course, it seems like there's been a gradual growth all along. It surely was growing some and I surely noticed it. But I can't think of any particular event or what would cause me to. I was busy, teaching and taking night classes and all that.

DR. CRAWFORD: And correspondence courses and summer school.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had very little free time.

MISS GORDON: I had very little free time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well it has been very good talking, but maybe we ought to stop here and come back and visit you again, Miss Gordon, if that would be all right?

MISS GORDON: It'd be all right, but I don't know what I could contribute.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'll think of some things to ask you. You've helped a great deal.

THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS "THE HISTORY OF MEMPHIS." THE DATE IS MARCH 22, 1988. THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MISS ANNA BENNETT GORDON. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. ALSO PRESENT WAS MAJ. BEN SCHULTZE. INTERVIEW II.

DR. CRAWFORD: Miss Gordon, last time we talked about your getting started in teaching and your career at first. Do you remember where you were teaching in the nineteen-twenties? Do you remember when the stock market crash came and the depression started?

MISS GORDON: I think I do.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember where you were then?

MISS GORDON: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: But you were teaching?

MISS GORDON: In 1920, I was still teaching art at Maury and Pope schools I believe. I really don't know. You've kind of got me on the spot there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now it looks like you started at A.B. Hill, according to the record here...

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Nineteen-thirteen and 1914. Then you went to Lauderdale from 1914, it looks like, to 1918. Then you went to Maury and Pope from 1919 to 1923.

MISS GORDON: Now what year was that you were just asking me that question?

DR. CRAWFORD: 1919 to 1923. And then you went to A.B. Hill in 1923, I guess in the fall, and you stayed there until the summer of 1929. So the latter part of the twenties, you were at A.B. Hill. Did you change your teaching any in that time? What subjects did you start out teaching?

MISS GORDON: Well, I started out as an aide, you know. Then I had a primary grade, I don't know, I think it was the third grade. Could you see from that? That will help, I think.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. That's a list of when you were where. And in the twenties you were at Maury and Pope Schools.

MISS GORDON: Yes, I taught art there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did you change to art? Was that something you had wanted to do?

MISS GORDON: No, they needed a teacher and I thought I could do it. Now how did I get into that?

DR. CRAWFORD: Had you had any training in art? They needed someone.

MISS GORDON: I think that must have been the reason. I don't know of any other reason.

DR. CRAWFORD: What grade level were you teaching art?

MISS GORDON: In the grammar grades.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you try to teach some art appreciation?

MISS GORDON: I just had them draw and dabble in paints and cut paper and little things like that, you know. Teach children to work with their hands. Combining colors and such as that. I taught them along that line.

DR. CRAWFORD: That sounds like something they would enjoy.

MISS GORDON: Yes, they did enjoy it it.

DR. CRAWFORD: You taught different classes through the day, I suppose?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you have a home room?

MISS GORDON: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well,that is extra work if you have a home room, so I know it is good not to have to keep those records.

MISS GORDON: Yes, that's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you get any art supplies for your teaching? Did they make them available for you?

MISS GORDON: I don't think so. I think the children had to bring their own little boxes of paints and things like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Crayons or pencils or something?

MISS GORDON: Water colors.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that a required subject or could they choose to take it?

MISS GORDON: Yes, that was right in like anything else, music and gym, calesthenics. That was just part of our program in their education.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were you glad to change and start teaching art?

MISS GORDON: Well, I was glad to have a job. [Laughter] That was what they needed and I did the best I could with it.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was in the nineteen-twenties. During that time, were you continuing to work on your degree?

MISS GORDON: No, let me see now. Let me think about that. No, I hadn't started working on that. I had been going to Normal in the summertime, as you know, but I hadn't decided yet to work toward something higher. I was just taking those courses. Of course, when I got all my credits together, I applied it toward my certificate. But I hadn't started out with any idea to what extent I'd go. Now they required you to go. At one time in my teaching, they required you to go to school one summer and to teach one summer and to have one summer vacation in three.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well I noticed that they paid you more each year after starting you at four hundred twenty per year in 1913. You salary just kept going up. Some years it stayed the same, but mostly it went up. But then there was a change, I see, after the Depression started.

MISS GORDON: They hardly had enough money to pay us, remember? They'd have us go around and try to collect taxes, get people to pay their taxes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Here in 1931, you salary went down from $1920 a year to $1760 and then two years later, it went down to $1500 and stayed there until 1937, when it began to go back up again, but that was actually a decrease.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did the Board of Education do, Miss Gordon?

MISS GORDON: They had us go and talk to people about paying their taxes.

DR. CRAWFORD: The Board of Education had the teachers going out trying to get people to pay their taxes.

MISS GORDON: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's very strange, isn't it. But they needed the money.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Because they barely had enough money to operate the schools.

MISS GORDON: That's right. They didn't have enough to operate the schools, hardly.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was everyone behind on paying their taxes?

MISS GORDON: Well, of course, I don't think everyone was behind. We were given a list. I don't remember whether we were given a list or not.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I know there was so little money in the Depression that some people could not pay taxes, some got behind, and I think there was so much of it that the tax collectors generally weren't taking people's property, were they?

MISS GORDON: Not that I know of.

DR. CRAWFORD: Just so many people were behind. And they had the teachers encouraging people to pay taxes.

MISS GORDON: That's what we were supposed to do.

DR. CRAWFORD: But you don't remember whether or not they gave you a list of people to talk to.

MISS GORDON: They surely must have because I wouldn't have known who to go to.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your salary continued to go up every year until

1930 or 1931. You started at four hundred twenty dollars. You had gone up to $1920 per year. But then, beginning in 1931, it dropped. And then in 1932 it dropped to sixteen hundred and stayed at that level for four years. And it was not until 1937 that they began to raise your salary again to $1720 per year. And after that it went up every year.

MISS GORDON: I thought you'd find that intersting and perplexing. Facts, real facts, and I'd wouldn't feel like I'd misled you or something.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that's entirely true. This is the official record they gave you for your statement of service prior to July 1, 1945. And were all the teachers supposed to go out and talk with taxpayers and try to encourage them to pay their taxes so the school would have enough money to operate?

MISS GORDON: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well that's strange. I wonder if anyone else, people who worked on the streets or in the police department, had to do that.

MISS GORDON: I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know times were hard then.

MISS GORDON: Yes they were.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what you first heard about the Depression?

MISS GORDON: No, I don't much.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it came in 1929 with the stock market crash. But I don't think it affected education for a little while. I think it was a while before it got to the

schools.

MISS GORDON: I know there was a time there you could hardly get sugar or meat of any kind...

DR. CRAWFORD: I think that was in World War II.

MISS GORDON: Yes, I think that was.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well I know money was short in the Depression. You know, just about the time the Depression started, 1929, I guess the beginning of the next school year, you had left A.B. Hill where you had been teaching art.

MISS GORDON: Let me see. I taught art at Maury and Pope. I was in music, music appreciation later. I don't think I was teaching art then, no. I remember Mr. Powell was the principal of A.B. Hill at that time and he needed a music teacher, especially a class in music appreciation. He wanted someone. He came over to the house and visited me and I went over there to teach music appreciation. I think I had some classes in singing, too. But we played records and things like that.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had started as a teacher's aide, then teaching elementary, and then teaching art and then you went to music.

MISS GORDON: Yes. They needed a music teacher at South Side High School, and I really didn't have the qualifications at the time, but they needed someone, and I stepped in there, and I went to school and got the credits I needed in just a short time so that I was qualified to teach in high school. Because I wasn't qualified to teach in high school. I was taken, though, since they needed me.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you went to take some courses in what you needed to know.

MISS GORDON: Yes. I went to the University of Wisconsin and took music, different courses in music.

DR. CRAWFORD: And that was when you drove up there.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did you go from A.B. Hill to South Side?

MISS GORDON: Because they needed a teacher in music at South Side. Now Miss Claudena Eckles had the music and I think she went into the math department. But they needed someone and so I seemed to fit in. Anyway they took me.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they come to you about it?

MISS GORDON: They came to me.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now how much music did you have to take? You had to study some in Wisconsin.

MISS GORDON: Well I already had had some education as a pianist, you know. And I was particularly interested in the violin. And I would have given nearly anything in the world to play the violin. So I got a violin and I started out. Well, I just don't know. I've got the old violin in there. It's a wonderful instrument. Would you like to see it? You wouldn't care to see it right now.

DR. CRAWFORD: We'll see it when we've finished, then. So you took some courses in Wisconsin in music.

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. I got my degree in that, in public school music. I got my Bachelor of Music degree there. That's what it was.

DR. CRAWFORD: You went to A.B. Hill and went to South Side just a month before the Great Depression started, or the stock market crashed.

MISS GORDON: Well, I really didn't know much about stock markets.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were living at home then, weren't you?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was the beginning of the thirties. Had you gotten another car by then?

MISS GORDON: No. I never did get my car until I had been in high school for a while -- teaching in high school.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was your first high school?

MISS GORDON: That was the first high school. And the only high school I ever taught at.

DR. CRAWFORD: South Side. What street was A. B. Hill located on?

MISS GORDON: Latham. Now wait a minute. Latham, I think.

DR. CRAWFORD: South Side was larger than the schools you had been teaching at, wasn't it?

MISS GORDON: South Side was a large high school. I was teaching at A.B. Hill before I went to South Side. And A.B. Hill was a pretty big school. I don't know just exactly how many.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was South Side much different from what you had done before?

MISS GORDON: Well, of course the students were beginning to get a little different. I know Miss Little was saying

that I had been accustomed to teaching children. I tried to be strict with them, you know. And she said -- I don't know how that she happened to say that, but anyway, I had to wake up and know it was to either change myself or the type of pupil I was working with. The little ones, you have more control over. You tell them just exactly what to do and they're supposed to go ahead and do it. Well, the high school student doesn't take to that readily, you know. He wants a little more freedom.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well they were older and I'm sure wanted to be more independent.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now this was the 1930's. Times were very hard. Teachers had to help collect taxes. The Federal Government began to help with things in the city. Did you know any people in city government then?

MISS GORDON: I don't think so.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you ever meet Mr. Crump?

MISS GORDON: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Many people knew him, but, everyone in town couldn't.

MISS GORDON: No, I didn't know him personally at all.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you feel that he supported the school system?

MISS GORDON: Well I didn't give much thought to it. He was the mayor and that's all I really concerned myself about.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a city school system, of course, then. They had separate schools in the county?

MISS GORDON: Yes, oh yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What kind of car did you have in the Depression through the 1930's?

MISS GORDON: Well I don't even know when I got my first car, a Maxwell. I really don't remember.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think it would have been early, but I'm not sure of the year. And then you got another to replace it, didn't you?

MISS GORDON: The Whippet?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MISS GORDON: I must have been in high school then. I'm sure I was.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what size the Whippet was?

MISS GORDON: The Whippet?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. Was it a small car?

MISS GORDON: Yes. Let me see. Was it a four-door or just a two-door? I believe it was a two-door Whippet. You'd have to push the seat back. It was a very small car.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was a coupe, I guess. You fold the seat forward to get in the back seat.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Dr. Crawford's going to ask you these questions. We don't like two voices on the tape.

MISS GORDON: Yes, but I don't know, I just don't know how long I was working at it. I saved enough money to pay cash for it. In fact, I can't recall anything I have ever bought and paid on time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well you certainly did not lose any interest

then. You did not have to pay interest.

MISS GORDON: No. I paid cash. I don't remember anything I've bought on time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well that is unusual.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Can you vaguely remember how many years you had your Maxwell? It was a second-hand Maxwell. In other words, it had been owned before.

MISS GORDON: Yes.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Yes. You told us that last time. Can you vaguely remember how long you had your Maxwell before you bought the Whippet? I was trying to find an old automotive book I had at home. It told when those cars came out. But I couldn't find it.

MISS GORDON: Oh? Well, I know I must have kept it over four years.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Your Maxwell?

MISS GORDON: Yes. I didn't rush around and buy something new right away. I wore it out.

MAJ. SCHULTZE: Come on now, Miss Gordon, you and your Mama drove up to Wisconsin. You wouldn't wear it out. I'll bet you took real good care of it.

MISS GORDON: I kept it long enough to wear it out.

DR. CRAWFORD: But you still did a lot of driving. And you used it to go to work in. And you were in high school, you think, before you bought the Maxwell? Or was that the Whippet?

MISS GORDON: I think so.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now you started in high school in 1929. Probably that would have been about September. I guess you had the Maxwell or the Whippet then. What car did you get after you got the Whippet?

MISS GORDON: After the Whippet?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MISS GORDON: I think it was a Dodge, and after the Dodge, I got a Chrysler. They were all Dodge cars after the Whippet. And then I got a Chrysler.

DR. CRAWFORD: And I guess you don't remember what years those were. But at least, the Dodge was probably before World War II, which started for us in 1941. And you had been teaching ten years then. Actually, you had been teaching more than that, about twelve years, at South Side. And you were teaching music all that time?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you have your students do? Did you direct a choir or anything?

MISS GORDON: Yes, I had a big class where students just came in and sang, you know, all of them -- boys and girls -- that wanted to take music. They would sing songs they like to sing. Then I had a boys' chorus and a girls' chorus.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did they sing? Was it at school functions or would you go off the school grounds?

MISS GORDON: Well we had both. We'd go to other schools and sing and when things would come up, we were asked to go. I had a little orchestra, too, in high school. I had

classes in the instruments. It doesn't mean I played all the instruments, but I knew the working principle of all the instruments and I could tell the children what to do.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well you don't always have to play to be able to teach something.

MISS GORDON: That's the way it was. I knew the working principles of each instrument and they'd come in and bring their instruments and we'd learn to play. Now the violin, I had been taking lessons myself on the violin. And I knew that better than the wind instruments, the violin and the cello. We didn't have any violas at that time. Those were the principal stringed instruments that I had to deal with.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well you certainly picked a difficult one for yourself, with the violin.

MISS GORDON: Yes, but I just loved that better than anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did you play? Did you play with a group?

MISS GORDON: There was the Memphis Symphony that started up. I joined that. I never did play as well as I wanted to play, but I got into that, too. I played second violin in that.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had a section in the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

MISS GORDON: Tuthill was the director.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, Burnet C. Tuthill was the director. That was 1939 that you were in that. And it seems that you had a large group of musicians. Tuthill directed that a long time, didn't he?

MISS GORDON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now during the summers, were you still going back to school?

MISS GORDON: Yes. After I started and knew what I wanted to get my degree, I went every summer until I got it. A long time.

DR. CRAWFORD: It took a lot of going back and forth, didn't it?

MISS GORDON: It certainly did.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you continue to teach music all the time that you were at South Side?

MISS GORDON: No. You see, my parents were both sick. And I couldn't go out to these affairs where they'd go and play at night, after school hours. And I had to get into something else where I could be at home. I went in to the math department. I taught algebra.

DR. CRAWFORD: You made another change then. Had you studied math in college?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. I had studied it in order to qualify as a math... Of course algebra, but I took two or three courses of higher math at summer school at the University of Wisconsin. And I earned my points, credits, enough to teach.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you were qualified to teach art and music and math by that time.

MISS GORDON: Yes, I'd already been through that.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you were doing math teaching at the time.

MISS GORDON: Yes, so that I could stay at home at night. I'd have math papers. You see, I couldn't go out on

these programs with these children, and I had to take these papers home and grade them at night. And my Mother and Father were both sick at the same time.

DR. CRAWFORD: So you had to be there?

MISS GORDON: I had to be there. I was the only one, you see. We had no relatives at all here in Memphis, and no one to really be interested in us, just ourselves.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you like teaching math?

MISS GORDON: Yes, I did. I've always loved math from the time I began going to school.

DR. CRAWFORD: And at last you were teaching it. Did you have good students?

MISS GORDON: Yes. Pretty good students.

DR. CRAWFORD: Were some of them going to go on to college?

MISS GORDON: I'm sure any number of them went on to college, but I didn't follow it up and find out just who did and who didn't.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now you've probably heard from some of your former students.

MISS GORDON: Oh, I have had just lovely letters from some. But mostly from the students I had in the music department. That's where they got the most out of life when it comes to joy and living, you know. They got it in their music courses.

DR. CRAWFORD: So that's the sort of thing they would write back to you about.

MISS GORDON: Why, I have gotten some of the most beautiful

letters and it would just make me feel so good. One of the girls, her name was Opel Anderson and she married a man named Gordon. I'm sure they weren't any close relationship. Anyway, she writes to me all the time and Sunday before last, she called me up long distance and talked to me. She said, "I think of you every day."

DR. CRAWFORD: That's wonderful. It really is.

MISS GORDON: She's such a sweet girl to write such lovely letters. And then she has a very good friend who became a teacher, who was one of my pupils, in Florida. And she taught school in Florida and retired and is now living in North Carolina or some place now. But she writes to me, too. Just a lovely girl. But she was especially interested in music. I have received more letters and more calls from people in my music classes than from any others.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you think that is?

MISS GORDON: Because we all enjoyed the music. They were there to enjoy themselves. And all this group here, let me see. I think this is the girl here that writes me such lovely letters. Mildred Bailey was her name when she went to school. She's grown and married and has grown children. She's a grandmother now. But she lives out here in Whitehaven. She's just such a lovely girl.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mildred Bailey. Her picture is in an article about South Side. Yes, I'll bet people did enjoy that. And you enjoyed it, didn't you?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes, I had as much fun as anyone did, I guess.

I enjoyed myself.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you like to go out away from the school to sing?

MISS GORDON: Yes. We considered it an honor that they asked us to go.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. And that was a job you really did enjoy.

MISS GORDON: Yes, I did.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now according to your statement of service prior to July 1, 1945, you taught at South Side from the fall of 1929 to the summer of 1945. Did you stay at South Side longer than that? What year did you leave South Side?

MISS GORDON: After I got into South Side, I never left it any more. I changed from music to mathematics, but I didn't change schools.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year did you retire?

MISS GORDON: I retired in... Let me see. Was it '58? '57 or '58.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you had been working at that time at South Side for a long time.

MISS GORDON: Nearly thirty years, I guess.

DR. CRAWFORD: Nearly thirty years.

MISS GORDON: Combine music and math.

DR. CRAWFORD: And of course you had taught longer than that including your other time. But you had taught a lot of years there. Who was the principal?

MISS GORDON: When? At the beginning? At the very beginning, H.H. Gnuse.

DR. CRAWFORD: Gnuse. And who took his place? Would that have been Mr. Ball?

MISS GORDON: No, Mr. Ball never did teach at South Side. Or was he the superintendent?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, the superintendent.

MISS GORDON: Oh. Let me see. That name escapes me. I just can't think of the name. This picture of the man comes before my mind, but I just can't think of his name. It was Wadley.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were living at 473 LaClede in the 1940's. How long did you live there?

MISS GORDON: Well, let's see. I just really don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did your parents die, ma'm?

MISS GORDON: My mother died in '51 and my father died in '52, I believe.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you moved after that, I suppose.

MISS GORDON: Yes. I sold the old home and moved into an apartment on South Wellington and then I moved into an apartment on Belvedere. Before that I went to an apartment on McNeil and stayed there a while and then I went to the one on Belvedere and then I bought this house.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were sort of staying in mid-town, weren't you?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: You liked that part of the city, I suppose.

MISS GORDON: Yes, I liked it all right. I was brought up there.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about your teaching? Did that change any between 1913 and the 1950's?

MISS GORDON: What do you mean?

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you find that students were different or the schools were changing?

MISS GORDON: Yes. In the later years, they began to get sort of like they are now. They began to get harder to control and teaching was much more difficult and discipline was almost non-existant.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now after World War II, you had some older students, some veterans, coming back, didn't you?

MISS GORDON: In what way coming back?

DR. CRAWFORD: To school, to finish. Had any of them left high school and did they go back?

MISS GORDON: No, not that I know of. They had graduated there and I didn't see them any more.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't know. Many of them came to college after the war was over, many of the veterans.

MISS GORDON: Maybe so.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's why they had the G.I. bill to help them. Were times hard during World War II? You mentioned when it was hard to get sugar and meat and things like that. Was it hard to find things you needed?

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes, I think so.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did that affect schools in any way? I know the Depression did. Did many of the men who were teaching, or in administration or coaching go into service in the war?

MISS GORDON: Well, I can't think of any that I knew.

DR. CRAWFORD: Some of them did in my town. And it didn't affect

your students much, did it? I know it was hard to get gasoline, that was rationed, and tires and everything else.

MISS GORDON: And everything else. Sugar. Sugar especially. And meat. It was hard to get meat. Some things, the groceries, you know, were hard to get. But we got through it some way.

DR. CRAWFORD: What part of your teaching did you like best?

MISS GORDON: Of all, the whole picture?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MISS GORDON: Music classes.

DR. CRAWFORD: The last part you did.

MISS GORDON: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: The next-to-last.

MISS GORDON: I had math the last part.

DR. CRAWFORD: You closed with math, but you really enjoyed the music more.

MISS GORDON: I enjoyed that immensely. I enjoyed that the whole time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well you taught a lot of different things at several different schools but you stayed at South Side a very long time. Was it a good school when you left?

MISS GORDON: It was considered a very good high school.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had it improved while you were there?

MISS GORDON: I always considered it a good school, and as far as I'm concerned, I did my best there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Many of the students were very successful, you know.

MISS GORDON: Yes, Mr. Gnuse was considered a very, very fine principal. He was a wonderful disciplinarian who the children, boys especially, had a great deal of respect for. He was a fine principal.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well that helps when they respect someone around.

MISS GORDON: Oh, yes. Now why can't I think of this man's name?

DR. CRAWFORD: Who took Mr. Gnuse's place?

MISS GORDON: Yes. I've started losing names. As I got older, it becomes more difficult for me.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well I think everyone has trouble with names. I certainly do.

MISS GORDON: Well misery loves company, you know. [Laughter]

DR. CRAWFORD: I have been very impressed by what you have remembered, and it's been a lot of help. We've got a good picture of your teaching and of schools at the time and I appreciate you taking time to talk with us about this. And if I may I would like to take some of your clippings and your papers.

MISS GORDON: It's all yours if you want it. Just select what you want and take it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well thank you very much. I think it would be good to have them to add to these fine interviews.